

S E C R E T DOHA 00390
CXDOHA:
ACTION: DCM
INFO: PAO LEGATT AMB RSO RAO P/E

DISSEMINATION: DCM /2
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:MRATNEY
DRAFTED: CDA:MRATNEY
CLEARED: P/E:SRICE, RSO:FTHEUS, LEGATT:MREARDON

VZCZCDOI992
PP RUEHC RHMFISS RUEHZM RHMFISS
DE RUEHDO #0390/01 1400818
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 190818Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7929
RHMFISS/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DOHA 000390

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [OTRA](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DHS SECRETARY MICHAEL CHERTOFF'S
MAY 2008 VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Mr. Secretary, Qatar is emerging as a major transit point for people and cargo in a volatile part of the world, creating new challenges for our counter proliferation, counterterrorism, and law enforcement efforts. Your visit to Qatar will help us solidify our relationships and deepen our bilateral cooperation in these vital areas.

¶2. (C) We have requested meetings with the Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and his son, the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Sheikh Tamim has responsibility for the security portfolio in Qatar, and thus most of the issues relevant to your visit. Usually for such a visit, we would get a meeting with either the Amir or the Heir Apparent. In addition, we have the following meetings confirmed:

- Minister of State for Internal Affairs (de facto Interior Minister), Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser Al Thani. Sheikh Abdulla has responsibility for the Internal Security Forces, the Coast Guard, and immigration and airport police. The Embassy has a strong relationship with the Interior Ministry, which provides security for the U.S. Embassy and our official visitors. The USG provides training to the MOI through DS/ATA and CENTCOM.
- The head of Customs, Ahmed al-Mohannadi, who reports directly to the Prime Minister but who has close relationships with other security agencies. Al-Mohannadi is new in that position but was formerly a very senior officer with Qatari State Security, the domestic security and intelligence agency. We have a strong interest in forging a close relationship with Qatari Customs, something we had been unable to do with his predecessor, and your visit will help considerably to that end.
- The Chief of Staff of the Qatari Armed Forces, MG Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyeh, who is the key Qatari official on issues affecting the U.S. military in Qatar. The Qatari Armed Forces are responsible for border security and have expressed an interest in cooperation with U.S. Border Patrol and other DHS agencies. Coastal and off-shore security is shared by the Coast Guard, which is part of MOI, and the Qatari Emiri Navy, which reports to MG Al-Attiyeh.

13. (C) The U.S. has a lot at stake in this small country:

- Qatar hosts - with no operational restrictions or rental costs - the U.S. Central Command's most important military installations in the Middle East.
- U.S. energy companies have invested tens of billions of dollars in the oil and gas industry here, and Qatar will soon become a major supplier of imported LNG to the U.S. market.
- Utilizing its extraordinary energy wealth, Qatar has made a commitment like few other Arab states to modernizing its education system, adopting not only the U.S. of education, but importing the U.S. educational institutions themselves.
- The Qatari leadership has taken important steps toward building a society where the rule of law is respected, the country's citizens increasingly participate in its governance, and a healthy civil society can flourish.
- Qatar is the home of Al Jazeera, the largest Arabic media outlet in the world with an audience of over 50 million.
- Qatar's rapid economic growth has led to a dreadful record on human trafficking and dehumanization of the foreign workers that account for the majority of the country's residents.
- An ambitious foreign policy, which includes friendly relations with Hamas and Syria, has often put Qatar at odds with the USG. (Meanwhile, Qatar also maintains overt and relatively positive ties with Israel.)

14. (S) A VITAL MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: Al-Udeid Air Base and other U.S. military facilities are critical to CENTCOM operations from Iraq to Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa. Qatar hosts approximately 9,000 U.S. forces, some 100 U.S. and Coalition aircraft, as well as the CENTCOM Forward Headquarters, the Combined Air Operations Center, SOCCENT Forward Headquarters, and other important DOD facilities. Qatar is funding over USD 700 million in construction for the U.S. at Al-Udeid Air Base, regularly sends military personnel to the U.S. for training, and after years of sourcing their military hardware in Europe, will be making major U.S. defense purchases. We are organizing a visit to Al-Udeid Air Base during your visit.

15. (C) A STRATEGIC PARTNER IN ENERGY: Qatar is exceptionally friendly to U.S. energy companies and appreciates the competence and expertise they bring to the country's economic development. Since 1999, there has been USD 60 billion in foreign investment in Qatar's energy sector with the majority, about USD 40 billion, coming from U.S. firms, including ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips. Qatar is also of growing importance to U.S. energy security as this small emirate will next year become a major supplier of LNG to the U.S. following opening of the Golden Pass terminal in southeast Texas. (Golden Pass was the first major Arab investment in the U.S. following the Dubai Ports issue and DHS was heavily involved in the CFIUS deliberations.)

16. (U) STAGGERING WEALTH: At over USD 60,000, Qatar's per capita income is already ranked in the top five in the world, alongside Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. Between now and 2012, Qatar's LNG exports will more than double, bringing a corresponding growth to Qatar's economy and global financial clout. That wealth is now driving massive infrastructure investment, including a new airport and orders for USD 12 billion in Boeing aircraft for Qatar Airways. Unfortunately, wild economic growth is also producing 14 percent inflation and feeding a demand for cheap construction labor in a country that already has a very poor record on treatment of foreign workers.

17. (SBU) COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION, RULE OF LAW, RELIGIOUS

FREEDOM: Beyond strong military and energy relationships, there is a lot going right in Qatar's domestic agenda. Qatar's commitment to modernize its educational system is exemplified by Education City, a 2500-acre campus on the outskirts of Doha. Managed by the Qatar Foundation, the umbrella organization chaired by the Amir's wife, Sheikha Mozah, Education City is home to six U.S. university branch campuses currently educating some 800 students:

- Texas A&M University (engineering)
- Carnegie Mellon University (business and IT)
- Weill-Cornell Medical School (medicine)
- Georgetown School of Foreign Service (foreign affairs)
- Virginia Commonwealth University (design)
- Northwestern University (journalism)

¶8. (SBU) Meanwhile, primary and secondary school curriculum is being reformed along U.S. standards and a network of competitive charter schools is gradually replacing out-moded government-run schools. Rule of law, if not full democratization, is taking root firmly, though slowly. Qatar hosts frequent conferences on inter-religious dialogue and Christian churches are being built on GOQ-supplied land - a Catholic church just opened and five others are planned.

¶9. (S) TROUBLESOME POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP: Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the U.S.-Qatar political relationship has soured badly, driven in particular by Qatar's foreign policy initiatives and its maddening behavior on the UN Security Council from 2006-07. Qatar continues high-level engagement with Hamas leaders even as we seek to isolate them, and supports the Syrian government, even while the U.S. works to support the democratic majority. Qatar is also often accused of funneling money to Hamas, though we have seen little definitive evidence that this is happening. Meanwhile, the senior Qatari leadership appears to have grown jealous of our relationships with regional rivals (including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan) and annoyed that we don't give Qatar more attention, including senior-level visits and visibility in our own regional initiatives.

¶10. (S) Bilateral CT and intelligence cooperation - of obviously critical importance in this region - has for several years been the worst of all GCC states. Recent visits by the Attorney General, the FBI Director, and the CIA Director have put this relationship on a more auspicious footing. Your visit should also help considerably in this regard.

¶11. (C) IRAQ: The Amir thinks we made a big mistake toppling Saddam Hussein, but shares our view that restoration of order and a successful democratic transition in Iraq are of paramount importance not only to Iraq but to the region. While the Qataris have expressed concerns about civil war in Iraq, their officials also state publicly that the Coalition needs to stay in the country to establish wider security. However, a strong distaste for Iraq's Shia-dominated government drives Qatar's resistance to follow through on some of our priorities, including comprehensive debt forgiveness and greater political engagement.

¶12. (S) IRAN: Iran hangs heavily over our relationship with Qatar, which worries that we may have plans for Iran, perhaps even military plans, that we are not sharing with them. During its tenure on the UN Security Council, Qatar cast the consensus-breaking (14-1) vote on Resolution 1696 in July 2006. (Qatar later joined consensus in two unanimous votes, UNSCR 1736 and UNSCR 1747, to impose sanctions on Iran's nuclear program.) Qatar fears and deeply distrusts Iran, and shares our concern about Iran's nuclear program, which it regards as unstoppable. But Qatar's geographic proximity, vulnerability of its energy installations, and the fact that its massive off-shore gas reserves are shared with Iran, dictate a less confrontational approach.

¶13. (C) AL-JAZEERA: Al-Jazeera is by far the region's most prominent media outlet and the bane of many governments in

the region, though no longer the irksome centerpiece of U.S.-Qatari relations. The network is nearly 12 years old with an Arabic-speaking audience of some 50 million viewers. In November 2006, it launched an English-language channel with a potential audience of 70 million and ambitions to compete with the major U.S. and British satellite networks worldwide. Since early 2006, the USG has seen a bumpy downward trend in inflammatory anti-Western bias and inaccuracy in Al-Jazeera's content, though biased and inaccurate reporting continues to appear. We have also been making more methodical efforts to get official USG voices on the network.

SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

¶14. (C) Discussion of the following issues would support Embassy Doha's objectives:

- (C) Qatar has a well-advanced biometric identification program which is used for both their nationals and for foreign workers. FBI Director Mueller, on a recent visit here, discussed a fingerprint/biometric sharing initiative with the Qataris, who responded positively. Your visit could emphasize the importance of that program.
 - (S) The rapid expansion of Qatar Airways will soon make Qatar a major transit point for people and goods. You could discuss transit cargo screening and cooperation on interdiction of cargo of proliferation concern. (The director of CIA's Counter Proliferation Center had well-received discussions with officials from Qatar State Security and Qatari Customs in March on this topic.) You could also ask about sharing passenger name records for transit passengers) a powerful CT tool, though something the Qataris will be reluctant to do.
 - (C) With steady cooperation from TSA (and engagement by TSA leadership) since the launch of non-stop flights to the U.S., Qatar's airline passenger screening procedures are improving. TSA now has a long-term TDYer now working with the Civil Aviation Authority. You could thank the Qataris for their cooperation with TSA and reiterate our commitment to the success of their flights, while emphasizing the need for improved screening of all passengers and cargo, not just on flights going to the U.S.
 - (C) Qatar's Coast Guard and Navy are under-trained, under-staffed, and under-equipped given the massive scale of their on-shore and off-shore energy infrastructure. The visit will be an opportunity to discuss cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard and emphasize the need to expand Qatar's own coast guard. (Embassy Doha has been developing plans to bring a team from NAVCENT to Qatar on May 27 to demonstrate a Mark 5 Special Operations Craft to the Qatari Armed Forces, Coast Guard, and Internal Security Forces. We also hope to host a demonstration for the Heir Apparent. Schedule permitting, we have approached the GOQ about organizing a demonstration for the Heir Apparent in which you could participate.)
 - (C) ICE is interested in establishing a bulk cash smuggling initiative with Qatar. There has been little appetite elsewhere in the Gulf, but the visit is an opportunity to pitch this initiative with the Qataris.
- RATNEY